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Abraham Lincoln and Education

Lincoln's Teachers

Excerpts from newspapers and other
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LINCOLN LORE

No. 52

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 7, 1930

LINCOLN LORE

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Dr. Louis A. Warren

Editor

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FIRST SCHOOL TEACHER

"Before leaving Kentucky, he (Abraham Lincoln) and his sister were sent for short periods, to A B C schools, the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazel.

"At this time his (Abraham's) father resided on Knob Creek, on the road from Bardstown, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee, at a point three or three and a half miles south or southwest of Atherton's ferry, on Rolling Fork."

Sketch prepared by Lincoln for Scripps

We have Abraham Lincoln's own testimony that Zachariah Riney was his first school teacher. This pedagogue probably exerted the first direct influence over Abraham Lincoln, outside the personnel of his own home.

Riney was born in 1763 in St. Mary County, Maryland. Sixty families living in this community pledged themselves to migrate to the Kentucky country within a specified time. The first twenty-five families moved as early as 1785. Within the next ten years the family group with which Zachariah was associated arrived at the Pottinger's Creek neighborhood near the Holy Cross church. This was the first church of the Catholic faith erected west of the Alleghany Mountains and was built by Father DeRohan in 1792.

By the year 1795 Thomas Riney, father of Zachariah, had passed away and Zachariah was appointed administrator of the estate. From the settlement papers in the Nelson County Courthouse we learn that Zachariah had a brother by the name of Basil and three sisters named Anna, Mary, and Henrietta. April 2, 1796, the name of Zachariah Riney appeared on the tax list for Washington County as a "white male over 21 years of age." His wife's name was Margaret. Nancy married James Alvey, Mary was united to Clement Gristy, and Henrietta became the wife of John Wathen.

The will of Thomas Riney states that "the negroes of which he died possessed should not be sold out of the family of his children." Thomas Riney

signed the will by making a mark, which would indicate he could not write.

Zachariah was living at the foot of Rohan Knob, on Pottinger's Creek, in 1805, when members of the order of Our Lady of LaTrappe established a colony there. As they remained only four years at the time of this first venture it is not likely that Riney, who was then forty-two years of age, was very greatly influenced by them.

Little is known about Riney's character. Just a single reference to his early reputation is revealed in a deposition taken in 1817 in which the deponent says that, "Riney is well versed in little tricks, that his father was an excellent man, but unacquainted with land titles, that he, as your respondent has been informed, believes Riney was well acquainted with the situation of the land at the time the exchange took place and that this complainant was to run all responsibility in the title and not come back on your respondent." As this was the deposition of the defendant in the case we might expect him to be prejudiced against Riney.

This litigation was over the tract of land on which Riney was then living and which he had purchased in 1811. Part of the farm originally had been in possession of the pioneer Joseph Hanks, and was situated on the banks of the Rolling Fork. The very same year Riney bought the farm, Thomas Lincoln moved his family from the cabin in which Abraham Lincoln was born to a farm on Knob Creek about two miles from the home of Riney.

The log school house for the Knob Creek community was situated where the town of Athertonville now stands, about two miles from the homes of Riney and Lincoln, who lived on different sides of the Rolling Fork. Abraham Lincoln probably attended the school taught in this log house in the year 1815.

It is difficult to learn very much about Riney's qualifications as a teacher. Inasmuch as he was 30 years old before he reached Kentucky, he must have had his schooling in Maryland. There are specimens of his handwriting in the early court records, which show him to have been a man of some accomplishments in this branch of the three R's.

We have the testimony of his grandson that Riney was a school teacher by profession and taught several schools in Hardin County. He can hardly be classed among the itinerant school masters. There are no reminiscences in the Riney family of whether or not Abraham Lincoln at the early age of six was an apt pupil.

Thomas Riney, Zachariah's father, was an owner of slaves and Zachariah was obliged to bring suit against one of his brothers-in-law in order to acquire his portion of the estate in the division of the negroes. This would indicate that he had no scruples against slavery so that it is not likely that he carried into the school room any opinions adverse to the institution.

At the time he became the teacher of Abraham Lincoln he must have been nearly 50 years old. It is not to be expected that a man of this age would exert so great an influence on a growing boy as a younger man. In fact, this first school teacher was 13 years older than Abraham's father.

As Abraham Lincoln would have learned little more than his letters under this first school teacher, it is very likely that Riney served the purpose as well as a more highly educated man.

In 1848 another group of Monks of the Trappist Order arrived from France and settled in about the same community, in Nelson County, where their predecessors had lived for a short period from 1805 to 1809. A grandson of Zachariah Riney, who affiliated with this group, wrote this reminiscence about the last days of his grandfather.

"Brother Benedict's grandfather sold his place in Nelson County about 1830 and bought a farm in Hardin County at a place now called Rineyville, on which Brother Benedict's father, Sylvester Riney, lived and reared his family. Grandfather lived with my father for nearly twenty-five years. He was my first teacher, as well as Abraham Lincoln's first teacher.

"Brother Benedict can say that he learned much of what he knows from him, and as I liked him very much a great part of my childhood was spent with him. When 94 years of age he came to Gethsemani in 1856, and I with him. He lived here a little more than two years. He died in 1859."

While there is no evidence that Zachariah Riney was ever associated with the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani until he was 94 years old, his grandson, who prepared the above reminiscence, became a faithful member of this colony while still a young man. Abraham Lincoln's first school teacher lies buried in the graveyard of the Trappist brotherhood within the enclosure of the monastery.

It would seem fitting that the resting place of Zachariah Riney should be simply but appropriately marked with a tablet setting forth the fact that he started Abraham Lincoln on the way to intellectual achievement.

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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

CALEB HAZEL, LINCOLN'S NEIGHBOR AND TEACHER

According to the testimony of Abraham Lincoln, the name of his second school teacher was Caleb Hazel. Like his predecessor, Zachariah Riney, Hazel was no itinerant pedagogue but a resident of long standing in the Knob Creek community. He was very closely associated with both of the parents of the president, as will be shown.

Some time in the year 1785, Hazel married the Widow Hall. On November 17, 1788, he signed an agreement to pay her orphan children, Elizabeth, Levi, David, and Henry, "the sum of five pounds each" which was due them from the estate of their father who had been killed by the Indians.

Elizabeth Hall and Levi Hall both married children of Joseph Hanks, said to be the grandfather of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother. On January 10, 1794, Hazel signed an endorsement as a witness to a land transaction which took place between two of the sons of Joseph Hanks.

As early as December 9, 1789, Hazel's home had become sufficiently well known to have been designated in a road order as "Caleb Hazel's cabin on the waters of Knob Creek." In 1795 he was appointed a surveyor of the road from "the mouth of Knob Creek to Hazel's cabin."

There is evidence that for some time he kept a tavern or "ordinary," as it was then called. On September 24, 1793, an indictment was brought against him "for retailing spiritous liquors by the small without a license." He evidently continued in the tavern business for in 1797 he was issued a license "to keep an ordinary at his home on Knob Creek." The year after this license was granted, he contracted on the 17th of March, 1798, by a "written agreement to rent the place for six years to Conrad Suter for \$51.00 per year." Apparently Hazel refused to give Suter possession as is set forth in a suit brought against Hazel. Further difficulties were experienced by Hazel when he sold some property on Knob Creek to Clement Lee and also

deeded the same piece of ground to his stepson, Henry Hall.

It was about this time that Hazel decided to move to Green County. His name disappeared from the tax books of Hardin County and was entered on the Green County records.

In the meantime, four children had been born to Caleb Hazel and the former Widow Hall—Richard, Peter, Caleb, and Lydia. Richard was born May 14, 1786. When the oldest child was twenty years old, the same year that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married in Washington County, Caleb Hazel bought twenty acres of land in Green County, about halfway between Greensburg and Hodgenville. Probably he had been living on this place for the past three or four years.

Some time after the Lincolns moved to Knob Creek in 1811 Caleb Hazel returned and occupied a one hundred acre tract adjacent to the Thomas Lincoln land. In fact, the house of Caleb Hazel was so close to the Lincoln line that the person who later purchased the cabin wondered whether or not it was on his land or the land Lincoln had owned.

Some time previous to Lincoln's school days, Caleb Hazel's wife had passed away, and when he started out on a second matrimonial venture he secured Thomas Lincoln, his next door neighbor, to serve as his bondsman. This bond signed by Thomas Lincoln October 12, 1816, is one of the last official acts of Thomas Lincoln in the state of Kentucky as the family moved to Indiana within the next month or so.

An endorsement on an early record in the Hardin County court shows that when Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky he stored "about forty bushels of corn in the loft of the house that Caleb Hazel now lives in."

Hazel's new bride was Mary Stevens. She certified in an oath to the county clerk that her age "is far above the demands of the law." It was just previous to this second marriage in 1816 that Hazel became the school teacher of Abraham Lincoln. He was then a widower and must have been about 55 years of age. He had been a member of the South Fork Baptist Church but was given a letter of dismission about the time the church was divided over the slavery controversy. He probably united with the Little Mount Anti-Slavery Church which was organized at that time and with which Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lincoln were affiliated.

We learn from one of the descendants of Caleb Hazel that "he was what

the old people called a school teacher. Our grandfather Hazel was a good scholar for his time and had many fine books leather bound. I believe they were his father's books brought from Virginia." There are several examples of Caleb Hazel's handwriting in the records of the Hardin County court. There is evidence that he was not only a good scribe but a good grammarian as well. There is no question but what he was able to contribute very much to the early educational training of Abraham Lincoln.

It should not be overlooked that he was very closely connected with the Hanks family through his marriage with Elizabeth Hall. Letters from his descendants, which are now before me, claim that the Halls, Hankses, and Hazels all came into the Kentucky country together and were neighbors back in Virginia. There is evidence that he was a friend of the pioneer Joseph Hanks. We have observed that two of his stepchildren married two of Joseph Hanks children, William Hanks and Nancy Hanks, said to be uncle and aunt of Abraham Lincoln's mother. One of Caleb Hazel's own children and a son of William Hanks married sisters.

When Abraham Lincoln went to school to Hazel he was no stranger to the teacher. Hazel was not only well acquainted with the child's parents but he had known the boy's grandparents as well. The Knob Creek school must have been made up, very largely, of cousins. Among these cousins were some of Hazel's own grandchildren.

As the first school teacher of Abraham and his sister Sarah was at least fifty years old when he taught them and as Hazel himself was fifty-five when he taught the children of Thomas Lincoln, the future president's first formal instruction was cared for by men above middle age.

Hazel's last days were spent in Green County on the farm still known as the old Hazel farm. He died on a boat on the Ohio River while on the way to visit his son Peter Hazel.

There are some descendants of Caleb Hazel who feel that Caleb Hazel, Jr., was the teacher of the president rather than the old gentleman. We know nothing whatever about the scholarship abilities of the younger Hazel and preference seems to have been given to the older man as the teacher of Abraham. Caleb, Jr., was married on January 13, 1813, to Polly Atherton, but is said to have been living in Green County at the time Lincoln was attending the Knob Creek school in Hardin County.

Note: This is the second article in a series on the five school teachers of Abraham Lincoln.

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Dr. Louis A. Warren

Editor

LINCOLN'S FIRST HOOSIER SCHOOLMASTER

We learn from two brief, biographical sketches, prepared by Abraham Lincoln about the time of his nomination for the Presidency, the names of his three Indiana school teachers and the status of education in the community where he lived at that time.

"Abraham went to A, B, C schools by litters kept successively by Andrew Crawford, ————Swaney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other."

This statement he prepared for Mr. Scripps, and the following paragraph for Mr. Fell:

"There were some schools, so-called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond 'readin, writing, and cipherin,' to the Rule of Three. If a straggler, supposed to understand Latin, happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard."

We note that Lincoln not only named his school teachers but he named them in the order of their administrations. This would make it quite clear that Andrew Crawford was his first schoolmaster.

There has been some shifting of this order by Lincoln biographers in order to dramatize some of the settings in which they wished to place Abraham Lincoln, but the order which he used can be ably supported by documents which are available.

We are first introduced to Andrew Crawford by an estray notice which appeared in the *Western Sun* for December 19, 1818, which is signed by A. Crawford, Justice of the Peace:

"Taken up by Jesse Hoskins in Spencer County, Carter Township, a horse valued by George Lee and William Hoskins at \$40.00. A true copy from my estray book."

Jesse Hoskins was a neighbor of Thomas Lincoln and this places Andrew Crawford in the Lincoln community as early as December 19, 1818.

On January 20, 1819, Crawford performed the rites of matrimony for Joseph C. Wright and Dinah Pierce. As a Justice of the Peace he was often called upon by the young people of the community to serve in this capacity. The last wedding service he is known to have performed was for Robert Angel and Polly Richardson. This was on March 14, 1821.

Most of the young people married by Crawford during these years were from the Lincoln community, which indicates that his residence from December, 1818, to March, 1821, was in Carter Township, Spencer County.

The Spencer County census for 1820 contains the name of Andrew Crawford and lists him as between twenty-six and forty-five years of age. His wife, whose name we do not know, was between eighteen and twenty-six. They had two children, a son and a daughter, both under ten years of age.

The writer has made a careful search of the public records but finds no evidence of Andrew Crawford in Spencer County after the month of March, 1821. The implication is quite clear that he moved from the community about that time.

Evidently it was within this space of a little more than three years that he taught Abraham Lincoln. This is in agreement with Lincoln's own testimony that Crawford was his first Indiana school teacher.

One of the early biographers who interviewed Lincoln claimed that Lincoln did not attend school in Indiana until shortly after his father married his second wife. The wedding of Thomas Lincoln and Sarah Bush Johnson took place in December, 1819. As the schools in southern Indiana usually kept during the winter months, it would appear that Crawford taught Lincoln during the winter term of 1820-1821.

There is some evidence to support the statement that Crawford's school met in his own cabin home and that not more than ten or twelve children were enrolled. The location of the Crawford home has not been established.

We know from examples of Crawford's handwriting that he was a good scribe but aside from that we are able to learn little of his scholastic training except the statement which Lincoln made about early school teachers in general.

There are four incidents associated with the Crawford school which tradition has kept alive. One or two of them lack some of the dramatic elements,

usually built up, when we realize that Lincoln was not more than twelve years old at this time. They are worth repeating, however, as they give an insight into the conduct of the early school.

Crawford evidently tried to teach his pupils etiquette, or "manners" as it was then called, and he pursued this course by practical demonstrations. He would ask one of the pupils to withdraw from the schoolroom and then re-enter, being received at the door by one of the other scholars who escorted him from bench to bench, introducing him to each one present.

Much has been made of Lincoln's appearance at this time and a jocular rather than serious aspect has been given this valuable backwoods training.

Another widely circulated story of an incident in the Crawford school is the famous spelling match, in which Lincoln helped one of his classmates to spell the word "defied." Katy Roby was asked to spell this word and continued as far as "d-e-f" when she paused, not knowing whether to use a "y" or an "i." Looking over toward Lincoln she saw him point his finger at his eye and immediately took the hint, spelling the word correctly.

It was at the Crawford school, also, where the teacher observed that one of a pair of antlers, which had been fixed to the wall, was broken off. Upon his inquiry as to who was responsible for this, Lincoln immediately rose and explained that he did not intentionally break it but he thought it would hold his weight and found out that it wouldn't. The teacher is said to have commended him for his honesty.

Possibly the greatest contribution which Andrew Crawford made to Abraham Lincoln was the placing in his hands of "Weems' Life of Washington."

Practically all of the early biographers are in agreement that this book belonged to Lincoln's school teacher, Andrew Crawford.

This fact is supported by Lincoln's own testimony made in Trenton when he said:

"Away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, . . . Weems' Life of Washington."

The issue of Lincoln Lore for next week will discuss this early biography and its influence over Abraham Lincoln.

Note: The editor of Lincoln Lore would be pleased to have any information as to what became of Andrew Crawford after he taught the Lincoln school in Spencer County in the year 1821 or thereabouts.

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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

LINCOLN'S LOST SCHOOL-MASTER

One of the characters closely associated with Abraham Lincoln during his youth, and whose first name Lincoln, himself, had not been able to recall, is now presented for the first time in the person of his second Hoosier school master. When Lincoln prepared his autobiography for Scripps he named his Indiana school teachers as follows: Andrew Crawford, ————Swaney and Azel W. Dorsey.

The name Swaney has often been confused with Sweeney and it is sometimes so spelled in the public records. There is no question, however, but that the correct spelling was Swaney. The given name, which the President had forgotten, is usually left blank in most biographies.

Old citizens, who have been interviewed, have suggested three different names, Nelson, Wesley, and John as the given name of Swaney. The late Senator Beveridge, in his recent work, says the name of this school teacher was William Sweeney, but his authority for this information is not valid.

For several years I have been on the lookout for some document which might give a clue to this unknown pedagogue. Recently I was rewarded by finding in the Warwick County, Indiana, Courthouse, a public record which I am quite sure, refers to the Swaney mentioned by Lincoln.

The record in question is a guardian's bond, which not only gives us the name and age of Swaney but presents the coincidence that Azel W. Dorsey, another school teacher of Lincoln's, was his guardian. A copy of the document follows:

October 20, 1817, at Darlington.

Azel W. Dorsey appeared in court with James Swaney and Charlotte Swaney, orphan children of Michal Swaney, Dec. and being appointed guardian of said children and on application to the court that the said James of the age of 17 and ½ years bound to him for and during the term of four years and six months upon the following conditions: The said boy is to have at the expiration of the said service a horse, saddle and bridle to be worth seventy dollars and learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three and furnish him with good wearing apparel and a

good decent suit of clothes at the expiration of his said apprenticeship; and the said Charlott at the age of fourteen years and six months is also bound out to the said Dorsey for and during the term of three years and six months from the date hereon on the following conditions as the said Azel W. Dorsey agrees to learn her to read and write a legible hand and find her meat, drink washing and lodging and also find her good decent wearing apparel suitable to the seasons and a good feather bed and furniture at the expiration of her said servitude and one decent suit of clothes at the expiration of three years and six months aforesaid and it is further ordered by the court that the said Dorsey enter bond in the clerk's office in the sum of \$1000 with William Ross security for his true and faithful performance aforesaid.

The fact that there seems to be but one early family by the name of Swaney in Spencer County, contemporaneous to the Lincoln's, is strong evidence that we have the school teacher mentioned in the record above. It will be noted that Michael Swaney, the pioneer, was dead by 1817, so that he could not have been confused with the Swaney who taught Lincoln.

James Swaney was born in the year 1800. After four years of apprenticeship, spent under the direction of Dorsey, he remained, evidently, in the home of his benefactor and while residing there taught school. We have evidence that Swaney became the teacher of Lincoln not earlier than 1822 and not later than 1825. He was, therefore, during this period, between the ages of 22 and 25 and but nine years older than Lincoln himself. He was the only teacher Lincoln ever had whose age was anywhere near his own.

Swaney's preparation is set forth in the court record, which states that Dorsey should "Learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three." This bears out Lincoln's own testimony as to the qualifications of his early teachers. Swaney had at least a horse and a fairly good suit of clothes at the expiration of his apprenticeship in the fall of 1821, but there is no evidence that his father had left him an estate in which he shared.

Shortly after Swaney taught the school Lincoln attended in Spencer County, he married Sarah Jane Cran-non (or Cranmore). This wedding took place on December 18, 1825, and is recorded in the Spencer County marriage register. He was then twenty-five years old. His sister Charlott was but 18 when she was united in marriage to Charles Myers on January 19, 1821.

In the Spencer County census for the year 1830, both James Swaney and his wife are listed as being between

20 and 30 years of age. They also had one child, a boy, who was under five years of age. The census shows that at this time they were living at Rockport, the county seat of Spencer County.

It is very likely that the John Swaney whose name appears on the petition for a resurveying of the town of Gentryville, near where the Lincoln's lived, was the same five year old son of James Swaney listed in the aforesaid census. He has undoubtedly been confused with his father James as the school teacher of Lincoln.

Of the three men who taught Lincoln in Southern Indiana, Swaney seems to have been the only one who continued to make his residence there. Spencer County deed books show him to have been in possession of two quarter-sections of land in 1830, one in Section four, Township seven, Range one; the other in Section sixteen, Township six, Range one.

While Lincoln is said to have mentioned Swaney many times in later years none of these reminiscences seem to have been preserved in a form which makes them dependable.

Most biographers have followed the story of Lincoln's schooling as told by Lamon in his life of Lincoln. He states that the Swaney school was the last one which Lincoln attended in Indiana. This is in disagreement with Lincoln's own testimony. A reminiscence of John Hoskins appears to be about the only accurate description of the school.

"To get there he had to travel four and a half miles; and this going back and forth so great a distance occupied entirely too much of his time. His attendance was therefore only at odd times, and was speedily broken off altogether. The schoolhouse was much like the other one near the Pigeon Creek meeting-house, except that it had two chimneys instead of one . . . 'Here,' says John Hoskins, the son of the settler who had 'blazed out' the trail for Tom Lincoln, 'we would chose up, and spell as in old times every Friday night.' Hoskins himself tore down 'the old schoolhouse' long since, and built a stable with the logs."

I find that John Hoskins entered land in Spencer County as early as September 2, 1818. This property was in Jackson Township Section twenty-three. If this was the land on which the school stood the distance Abraham Lincoln had to walk to reach it has not been exaggerated. It is two miles from the Lincoln home to Gentryville and Hoskins' place is at least two and one-half miles to the south.

Nicholay and Hay conclude that Lincoln had been attending this school but a short time when his father feeling that there was too much waste of time took him out and put him to work. It is not likely that Abraham Lincoln was much the wiser from his brief contact with James Swaney.

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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

AZEL W. DORSEY, LINCOLN PEDAGOGUE

The last name of one of Lincoln's school teachers was Hazel, and the first name of his last instructor was Azel. The similarity of names has caused some confusion in identifying these two characters.

Azel Walters Dorsey was the only school teacher of Lincoln, as far as we can learn, who lived contemporaneously with him in the Illinois country. When Lincoln prepared his autobiographical sketch for Scripps and named his five school teachers successively, he named Dorsey last. His only personal reference in this sketch about any one of the teachers was about the latter, of whom he said:

"The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois."

The first information we learn about Dorsey, in the court records, is the fact that he married Eleanor Spriggs in Nelson County, Kentucky, on January 4, 1807. Three days later he and his brother Greenberry Dorsey went on a note, payable to Abraham Vanmatre, for the sum of \$225. We would infer that coming so close to the date of the wedding it had something to do with the matrimonial venture. Whatever the money was used for it is evident that the Dorseys could not meet the payment when it came due on the following December, and it was in May of the next year before any payments were made.

The year Abraham Lincoln was born Azel Dorsey and Greenbury Dorsey his brother, were farming a piece of ground in Hardin County, Kentucky, close by the Mill Creek farm purchased by Thomas Lincoln. Dorsey must have been well acquainted with Lincoln's father and his aunt Mary Lincoln Brumfield. The Brumfields were close neighbors.

In this same year 1809 Azel Dorsey, George Burkheart, and Greenberry Dorsey had rented some land on Clear Creek from Michael Reuch. The fate of the venture is best told in answer to the bill of the suit which Reuch brought to recover damages.

"They (Dorsey, Burkheart, and Dorsey) did cultivate the ground in a farmer-like-manner under the term leased . . . they did pay the plaintiff $\frac{1}{2}$ part of the corn raised on the said farm, stacked the hay in three or six

stacks and gave the plaintiff one-third thereof . . . on that day there was a great tremendous flood and freshet in Clear Creek, running through the leased premises, which swept and carried off from the said premises, all the rails and fencing thereon, by means of which irresistible act of nature or God the defendants were disabled from leaving the farm in the repair required by the covenant."

Apparently the Dorsey's matrimonial seas were rather rough those first two years as far as financial matters were concerned.

By the year 1813, however, the tax lists show that Dorsey owned 100 acres of land and three horses. The same year he was appointed a commissioner of the revenue tax. This was a responsible office and kept Dorsey busy several weeks with a fair remuneration. His brother, Greenberry, owned slaves but there is no record to show how Azel stood on this question which was a live subject of debate in pioneer Kentucky.

Dorsey arrived in the Indiana country as early as May 13, 1816, when he served as clerk of an election at the home of William Berry in Ohio Township, Warrick County. In the year 1818 he was serving as Treasurer and Coroner in the territory that is now Spencer County, Indiana.

Such responsible positions as these indicate that Dorsey was a leader in the affairs of the community.

His popularity may have been responsible for his decision to enter the mercantile business as set forth in this agreement filed in Spencer County Court House:

Rockport, March 10, 1819.

"A covenant and particular bond between A. W. Dorsey and M. B. Snyder. We do agree to and have this day entered into co-partnership in the mercantile business for the term of 5 years trading under the firm of Dorsey and Snyder . . ."

"As early as 1820 Dorsey began to purchase lots in Rockport, near where he then lived, but by March seventh of the following year he had moved to an adjacent county, Dubois. The census for 1820 shows him to be a resident of Dubois county, at that time. He and his wife are both listed as between 26 and 45 years of age. Three sons under ten years of age and one boy between 10 and 16 are also listed. By May 10, 1823, the family had returned to Spencer County but continued to sell some of their Rockport land holdings. It was in June, 1824, when it appears that their last Rockport real estate was sold. What became of the partnership venture with Snyder in the mercantile business is not known.

It seems most likely that it was during the early months of 1826 that Lincoln attended Dorsey's school as

on March 1, of that year Lincoln copied into his manuscript book of examples several items under these headings: 1st "A definition of discount," second, "Rules for its computation," third, "Proofs and various examples."

Dorsey's qualifications to teach are evident as he was able to instruct James Swaney, a former teacher of Lincoln. In fact, it may be accepted without doubt that Dorsey was by far the best equipped tutor who had instructed Lincoln, and fortunately came in contact with the boy at a time when some advanced training in mathematics would be helpful to him.

The variety of the positions that Dorsey held tends to prove that his education, for that day at least, was not of the single track style. The student of arithmetic then was considered to have reached the peak of intellectual achievement.

At the time Lincoln became the pupil of Dorsey the latter was about forty-two years of age as he was born November 5, 1784.

Dorsey migrated to the Illinois country two years before the Lincolns' left Indiana and taught a term of school there in the fall and winter of 1828-29.

The late J. B. Oakleaf contributed an article to the Journal of the Illinois Historical Society in which he tells of Dorsey's residence in Schuyler County, Illinois, and was successful in locating the grave of Dorsey. Mr. Oakleaf was convinced that Dorsey was in the war of 1812 and received his land grant in Schuyler county in recognition of that service. In 1840 Dorsey entered two tracts of land in the county.

Mr. Oakleaf was successful in discovering the grave of Dorsey and on the tomb stone the date of his death was clearly inscribed: September 13, 1858. This discovery would not allow the continuance of the tradition which claims that Dorsey was living at the time of Lincoln's election to the presidency. It does not invalidate the testimony of Dorsey that at the time he taught Lincoln, his pupil, who was then marked for the eagerness and diligence with which he pursued his studies, came to the log cabin school house arrayed in buck skin clothes, a racoon-skin cap, and provided with an old arithmetic which had been found for him to begin his investigations into the "higher branches."

One of Dorsey's Illinois school pupils, the Reverend Chauncey Hobart, in his book "Recollections of My Life. Fifty Years of Itinerary in the Northwest," writes that Mr. Dorsey remembered young Lincoln kindly, spoke of him frequently and said:

"Abraham Lincoln was one of the noblest boys I ever knew and is certain to become noted if he lives."

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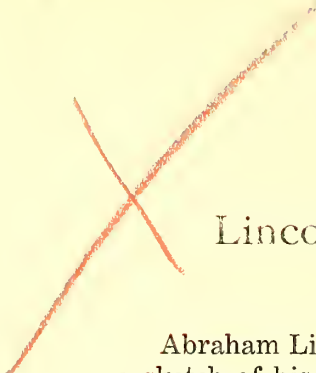
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be loyal? Thinking of Voorhees it seems that it can be done. The war to his way of thinking was unnecessary. It was supported in objectives and methods by a majority to which Voorhees did not belong. In political theory, he was directly opposed to them and hence found a place in the minority group. His great oratorical powers brought him to the front in that group. Here, he energetically attacked, yes, savagely attacked, the methods of the majority in carrying on the war. He felt that the Constitution still lived—that the war should be prosecuted within its boundaries. He saw the majority pushing the powers of government far beyond such boundaries and moving toward tyranny. He did not accept the Roman dictum, *Inter arma silent leges*. In speaking out boldly in opposition he did much to maintain the constitutional rights of the minority and to modify and restrain the majority in the exercise of its powers.



Lincoln's Hoosier Schoolmasters

BY LOUIS A. WARREN

Abraham Lincoln needed but forty-seven words to prepare a sketch of his life for the *Dictionary of Congress* published in 1858. Although less than seventy-five years have passed since this autobiographical note appeared, the accumulated mass of literature about him now surpasses that of any other man who has lived since the beginning of time, certain biblical characters excepted. In that first biographical effort of forty-seven words only one of them was used to summarize the status of his education at that time. The word was—"defective".

Inasmuch as four of the world's outstanding contributions to literature, the first Inaugural Address, the Gettysburg Address, the Bixby letter, and the second Inaugural Address, came from his pen within a comparatively short space of time after he reported that his education was "defective", it may be worth while to make a somewhat detailed study of one phase of his early educational processes.

Some light is thrown on the character of his Indiana schooling by a brief excerpt from another biographical sketch that he prepared in 1859:

There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher, beyond "readin', writin'," to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.¹

Two statements with reference to his scholastic progress should be noted here. At the time he became of age he says he did not know very much but could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three. In referring to the knowledge he acquired between the time he became of age and his nomination for the presidency, he writes that he made little advance dur-

¹ Sketch prepared for Jesse W. Fell, Dec. 20, 1859.

ing that period. We do know that between the ages of twenty-one and fifty-one he succeeded in mastering a great many books which called for wide reading and concentration. These books treated such subjects as the science of grammar, the theory and practice of surveying, ancient history, natural law, biography, essays, drama, poetry, theology, law, theories of government, and the mathematical problems presented in the six books of Euclid.

Unless one is familiar with the style of Lincoln's writings, he might conclude after reading the above exhibits that there was something irregular about Lincoln's acquisition of knowledge. The apparent lack of harmony in the statements of Lincoln and his actual accomplishments is due to what we might term today an inferiority complex.

When he was first asked to prepare a sketch of his life he quoted a line from Gray's *Elegy*, "The short and simple annals of the poor," and said that best described it. After receiving the nomination for the presidency he wrote these words to a friend, "Holding myself the humblest of all whose names were before the convention."²

In all of his letters and speeches one observes the very humble estimate which Lincoln placed upon his own ability. The tremendous store of information which he built up during his Illinois years, couched in his own words, was but a "little advance" over that gathered through the meagre opportunities of the early years. Thus his own humble appraisal of this stock of knowledge gathered during these latter years may also indicate that by the time he was twenty-one he knew considerably more than the alphabet and multiplication tables.

About the time of Lincoln's nomination for the presidency he was urged to prepare another autobiographical sketch. This appeared written in the third person and the following mention was made of his Indiana school days: "While here Abraham went to A B C schools by littles, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, ———— Swaney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year."³

² Letter written to Salmon P. Chase, May 26, 1860.

³ Sketch prepared for John L. Scripps.

This sketch introduces us to the main theme of this paper, Lincoln's Hoosier schoolmasters. A brief discussion of Abraham Lincoln's preliminary training will reveal the type of lad with whom the first of these three Hoosier schoolmasters came in contact.

We have the testimony of William Herndon to the effect that Abraham's mother was "a ready reader," and what we have learned about the environment in which she was brought up supports this fact. As there were but two children in the Kentucky home of the Lincoln's the mother had time to start her son in the most elementary phases of his education. Possibly she should be considered as his first instructor.

Closely associated with her as a teacher of the boy, and in a short time even supplanting her efforts, was Sarah Lincoln, Abraham's sister, who was two years older than he. It is not necessary to develop this phase of Lincoln's natural education. Anyone who is familiar with child psychology, has observed the teaching methods at work in any family group of children. It is not uncommon that younger children in the home assimilate the knowledge acquired by their older brothers or sisters quite as readily as if the information had come to them through a formal course of instruction. This was especially true where there were long recess periods extending over many months between the terms of pioneer schools. Undoubtedly Abraham Lincoln's primary education was stimulated by this sister two years older than himself, who not only accompanied him to school, but also served as his unsalaried teacher at home. To her, more than any one else, Abraham owed his early start in the field of knowledge. By the time he was seven years old, he had attended two terms of school. It is doubtful if there were many children in the pioneer country who had enjoyed so much formal instruction at so early an age.

The most fruitless season in Lincoln's mental development must have been the four years in southern Indiana between 1816 and 1820, when he was passing from seven to eleven years of age. The removal of his parents into this community where there was no school, together with the death of his mother during this period, disrupted any systematic plan for his instruction. During this interval he acquired as much

knowledge as his sister was able to impart so that she no longer could contribute much to his store of information.

During the latter part of this barren four-year period, a youth by the name of Dennis Hanks, related to Lincoln's mother, had taken up his residence in the Lincoln cabin. He was ten years older than Abraham and although his education was limited he assisted the Lincoln children in their self-assigned studies.

Sometime before Christmas of the year 1819, Thomas Lincoln brought to the Indiana cabin a new mother for the Lincoln orphans. He married the widow Johnston at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on December 2 of that year.⁴ While she was a good mother to Abraham and encouraged his study habits, it cannot be said that she was superior, either intellectually or spiritually, to Abraham's own mother. It is very doubtful if she could write her name and she did not affiliate with a church until after her marriage to Thomas Lincoln. Her own direct contribution to Abraham Lincoln's education must have been negligible. The three children of this widow, who came to make their home in the Lincoln cabin, were, however, real contributors to Abraham's early educational efforts in Indiana. Elizabeth Johnston, the oldest child was two years older than her step-brother and of the same age as his own sister. Undoubtedly she had had the privilege of attending the Elizabethtown (Kentucky) Academy at different periods between the time she was five and twelve years of age.

Elizabeth Johnston came under the instruction of at least one noted man, Duff Green, who taught at this Academy from 1812 to 1816. One of his assistants was Rhodes Van Meter who had attended Transylvania Seminary at Lexington and may have been Elizabeth's first teacher. The successor to Green was William Glascock. Aside from the regular primary courses taught in the school, Mr. Glascock offered the following courses: "For the English language, grammatically, and use of the Globes, Arithmetic, etc., \$15.00. Geometry, Plain and Spherical Trigonometry with their application to Surveying, Navigation, and Astronomy, Dialing, Gauging, etc. Algebra and Fluxions, \$30.00."⁵

When Elizabeth Johnston came to Indiana in 1819, although

⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, Marriage Register.

⁵ Elizabethtown Academy's Trustee Book.

not old enough to have acquired an understanding of higher mathematics, she had a much better formal education than either Abraham Lincoln or his sister. That they immediately began to appropriate what knowledge she had is an assured fact.

It was the year after the arrival of the new mother and her children that Abraham's formal schooling in Indiana began. The three children of Sarah Johnston and the two children of Thomas Lincoln would be incentive enough to encourage some teacher to start a subscription school in the Little Pigeon Creek community.

Our modern school programs, built up around the needs of the individual child, are in exact contrast to the pioneer schools which were guided entirely by the availability and qualifications of the prospective teachers. As both the schoolmaster and pupils were restricted from school attendance during periods when crops needed attention, or when the winter season became so severe that travel was impossible, the school term usually simmered down to about a two-months session each year.

Orphan children who were bound out were assured by court order that they would have at least a year's schooling. This did not mean that they were to be sent to school some time during a certain year, but that the aggregate of their schooling, during their apprenticeship should amount to a year or the equivalent of six two-month terms.

The school attendance of Abraham Lincoln in Indiana did not begin until the year 1820 when he was eleven years old. His first Hoosier schoolmaster was Andrew Crawford, who taught what was known as a subscription school. Crawford was not an itinerant teacher, but for some time had lived in the Lincoln community. We discover his name first in the columns of the *Western Sun* as a justice of the peace of Spencer County, who on December 19, 1918, signed an estray notice. Jesse Hoskins, one of the neighbors of Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham, had "taken up" an estray horse, valued by George Lee and William Hoskins at forty dollars, and Crawford had proceeded to advertise it.

The fact that Crawford was the justice of the peace for Carter Township is proof enough that he had some qualifications above the average pioneer. The thirty-eight closely

printed pages of laws in the published statutes of Indiana which set forth the procedure for a justice of the peace, imply that it was necessary for Crawford to know some law. Lincoln's first Hoosier school teacher may have influenced, unconsciously, the choice of profession which the son of Thomas Lincoln made in after years.

One of the chief functions of a justice of the peace in communities where preachers were not available was the uniting of people in matrimony. In January 1819, Crawford married Joseph C. Wright and Dinah Pierce. During the following two years he presided at a series of weddings in which the Parkers, Gordons, Randalls, Angels, Turnhams, Syscons, Smiths, Hutchinsons, Masons, Zans, Joneses, Thorps and Lamars, were the contracting parties. The last wedding he is known to have performed in Spencer County was on March 14, 1821, at which time Robert Angel and Polly Richardson were married.⁶ Crawford's name disappears from the records after the date of this wedding so he probably left Spencer County about this time. His removal in the spring of 1821 fixes the date of Abraham Lincoln's first Hoosier schooling. It was in the midsummer of 1820, after the corn had been laid by; in the early part of the winter of the same year, after the harvest had been gathered, this term reaching into the early part of 1821.

Aside from the implications which may be drawn from Crawford's service as justice of the peace little is known about his qualifications as a teacher. Examples of his handwriting indicate that he was a good penman and traditions which have come down to us throw further light on his teaching methods. He is said to have taught etiquette or "manners" as the subject was then called, and he pursued this course by practical demonstrations. One of the pupils would be asked to withdraw from the schoolroom and then re-enter, being received at the door by one of the other members of the class. The guest was then escorted from bench to bench, by the pupil acting as host, and introduced to each one present. Much has been made of Lincoln's appearance at this time and a jocular rather than serious aspect has been given this valuable backwoods training.

Another widely circulated story of an incident in the Crawford school is the famous spelling match, in which Lin-

⁶ Spencer County, Indiana, Marriage Register.

coln helped one of his classmates to spell "defied." Katy Roby was asked to spell this word and continued as far as "d-e-f" when she paused, not knowing whether to use a "y" or an "i." Looking over toward Lincoln she saw him point his finger at his eye and immediately took the hint, spelling the word correctly.

It was at the Crawford school, also, where the teacher observed that one of a pair of antlers, which had been fixed to the wall, was broken off. Upon inquiry as to who was responsible for this, Lincoln immediately rose and explained that he did not intentionally break it but thought the antler would hold his weight. He found out that it wouldn't. The teacher is said to have commended him for his honesty.

Possibly the greatest contribution which Andrew Crawford made to Abraham Lincoln was the placing in his hands of a copy of Weems' *Life of Washington*. Practically all of the early biographers are in agreement that this book belonged to Lincoln's school teacher, Andrew Crawford. This fact is supported by Lincoln's own testimony made in Trenton, New Jersey: "Away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, . . . Weems' *Life of Washington*."⁷ This book has often been confused with Ramsey's *Life of Washington*. Lincoln borrowed Ramsey's work some time after the year 1825 from Josiah Crawford, a neighbor. It was damaged by rain while in Lincoln's possession and he pulled fodder to pay for it. One cannot overestimate the influence exerted on Abraham Lincoln by Andrew Crawford and this famous book by Parson Weems.

When Lincoln prepared his autobiography for Scripps he mentioned his Indiana school teachers, but could not remember the full name of the second one whom he called Swaney. This name has often been confused with Sweeney and it is sometimes so spelled in the public records. There is no question, however, but that the correct spelling was Swaney. The given name, which the President had forgotten, is left blank in most biographies.

For several years the writer had been on the lookout for some document which might give a clue to this unknown pedagogue. Recently he was rewarded by finding in the War-

⁷ Speech before New Jersey Legislature, February 21, 1861.

rick County Courthouse, a public record which he is quite sure, refers to the Swaney mentioned by Lincoln. His first name was James.

The record in question is a guardian's bond, which not only gives us the name and age of Swaney, but presents the coincidence that Azel W. Dorsey, another school teacher of Lincoln, was his guardian. A copy of the document dated October 20, 1817, at Darlington, follows:

Azel W. Dorsey appeared in court with James Swaney and Charlotte Swaney, orphan children of Michael Swaney Dec. [—] and being appointed guardian of said children and on application to the court that the said James of the age of 17 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years bound to him for and during the term of four years and six months upon the following conditions: The said boy is to have at the expiration of the said service a horse, saddle and bridle to be worth seventy dollars and learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three and furnish him with good wearing apparel and a good decent suit of clothes at the expiration of his said apprenticeship; and the said Charlott at the age of fourteen years and six months is also bound out to the said Dorsey for and during the term of three years and six months from the date hereon on the following conditions: as the said Azel W. Dorsey agrees to learn her to read and write a legible hand and find her meat, drink, washing and lodging and also find her good decent wearing apparel suitable to the seasons and a good feather bed and furniture at the expiration of her said servitude and one decent suit of clothes at the expiration of three years and six months aforesaid and it is further ordered by the court that the said Dorsey enter bond in the clerk's office in the sum of \$1000 with William Ross security for his true and faithful performance aforesaid.⁸

The fact that there seems to have been but one family by the name of Swaney in Spencer County, contemporaneous with the Lincoln's, is strong evidence that we have the school teacher mentioned in the record above. It will be noted that Michael Swaney, the pioneer, was dead by 1817, so that he can not be confused with the Swaney who taught Lincoln.

James Swaney was born in the year 1800. After four years of apprenticeship, spent under the direction of Dorsey, he evidently remained in the home of his benefactor and, while residing there, taught school. We have evidence that Swaney became the teacher of Lincoln not earlier than 1822 and not later than 1825. He was, therefore, during this period, between the ages of 22 and 25 but nine years older than

⁸ Warrick County, Indiana, Probate Court Book, p. 1.

Lincoln himself. He was the only teacher Lincoln ever had whose age was anywhere near his own. His school, like Crawford's, was probably a subscription school.

Swaney's preparation is set forth in the court record, which states that Dorsey should "learn him to read, write and cypher through the single rule of three." This bears out Lincoln's own testimony as to the qualifications of his early teachers. Swaney had at least a horse and a fairly good suit of clothes at the expiration of his apprenticeship in the fall of 1821, but there is no evidence that his father had left an estate in which he shared.

Shortly after Swaney taught the school which Lincoln attended in Spencer County, he married Sarah Jane Crannon (or Cranmore). This wedding took place on December 18, 1825, and is recorded in the Spencer County marriage register. He was then twenty-five years old. His sister Charlott was but eighteen when she was united in marriage to Charles Myers on January 19, 1921.⁹

In the Spencer County census for the year 1830, James Swaney and his wife are listed as being between twenty and thirty years of age. They also had one child, a boy, who was under five years of age. The census shows that at this time they were living at Rockport, the county seat of Spencer County.¹⁰

Of the three men who taught Lincoln in southern Indiana, Swaney seems to have been the only one who continued to make his residence there. Spencer County deedbooks show him to have been in possession of two quarter sections of land in 1830: one in section four, township seven, range one, the other in section sixteen, township six, range one.¹¹ While Lincoln is said to have mentioned Swaney many times in later years none of these reminiscences seems to have been preserved in a form which makes it dependable.

Most biographers have followed the story of Lincoln's schooling as told by Ward Hill Lamon in his *Life of Lincoln*. He states that the Swaney school was the last one which Lincoln attended in Indiana. This is in disagreement with Lincoln's own testimony. A reminiscence of John Hoskins appears to be about the only accurate description of the school

⁹ Spencer County, Indiana, Marriage Register.

¹⁰ Photostat copies of census in Indiana State Library.

¹¹ Spencer County, Indiana, Tract Book.

house which was torn down and a stable built with the logs by Hoskins:

To get there he had to travel four and a half miles; and this going back and forth so great a distance occupied entirely too much of his time. His attendance therefore was only at odd times, and was speedily broken off altogether. The schoolhouse was much like the other one near the Pigeon Creek meeting-house, except that it had two chimneys instead of one . . . Here, we would choose up, and spell as in old times every Friday night.

John Hoskins entered land in Spencer County as early as September 2, 1818. This property was in Jackson Township section twenty-three. If this was the land on which the school stood, the distance Abraham Lincoln had to walk to reach it has not been exaggerated. It is two miles from the site of the Lincoln home to where Gentry's store once stood, and Hoskins' place was at least two and one-half miles to the south. Nicolay and Hay conclude that Lincoln had been attending this school but a brief period when his father, feeling that there was too much waste of time, took him out and put him to work. It is not likely that Abraham Lincoln was much the wiser from his contact with James Swaney.

An act of the Indiana Legislature, approved January 31, 1824, provided for a more general development of the school system. The last school Lincoln attended may be called a public school. Twenty freeholders in a township could authorize the building of a school house. After the site had been selected as near the center of the township as possible all freeholders over twenty-one years of age were required to put in one day each week in the construction of the schoolhouse until it was completed.

The statute specified that all of the schoolhouses constructed under the direction of the school trustees were to be "eight feet between the floors, and at least one foot from the surface of the ground to the first floor, and finished in a manner calculated to render comfortable the teacher and pupils."

The prospective teacher of the public school was to be examined by the trustees "touching his qualifications, and particularly as respects his knowledge of the English language, writing, and arithmetic." His salary was to be provided by taxation based on the value of the improved land in possession of the freeholders. The school was to be "forever open for

the education of all children within the district without distinction."²

Azel Walter Dorsey was the only school teacher of Lincoln, as far as the writer can learn, who later lived contemporaneously with him in the Illinois country. When Lincoln prepared his autobiographical sketch for Scripps and named his five school teachers successively, he named Dorsey last. The only personal reference in his sketch relating to any one of the teachers was to the latter, of whom he said: "The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois." The first information we learn about Dorsey, in the court records, is the fact that he married Eleanor Spriggs in Nelson County, Kentucky, on January 4, 1807.¹³ Three days later he and his brother Greenberry Dorsey went on a note payable to Abraham VanMatre, for the sum of \$225. We would infer that coming so close to the date of the wedding it had something to do with the matrimonial venture. Whatever the need for the money, it is evident that the Dorseys did not meet the payment when it came due in the following December, since it was in May of the next year before any payments were made.¹⁴

The year Abraham Lincoln was born, Azel Dorsey and Greenberry Dorsey, his brother, were farming a piece of ground in Hardin County, Kentucky, close by the Mill Creek farm purchased by Thomas Lincoln. Dorsey must have been well acquainted with Lincoln's father and his aunt, Mary Lincoln Brumfield. The Brumfields were close neighbors of the Dorseys. During this same year, 1809, Azel Dorsey, George Burkheart, and Greenberry Dorsey had rented some land from Michael Reuch on Clear Creek. The fate of the venture is best told in the answer to the bill of the suit which Reuch brought to recover damages:

They (Dorsey, Burkheart, and Dorsey) did cultivate the ground in a farmer-like-manner under the term leased . . . they did pay the plaintiff 1/3 part of the corn raised on the said farm, stacked the hay in three or six stacks and gave the plaintiff one-third thereof . . . on that day there was a great tremendous freshet and flood in Clear Creek, running through the leased premises, which swept and carried off from the said premises, all the rails and fencing thereon, by means of which

¹² *Revised Laws of Indiana*, 1824, 381-382.

¹³ Nelson County, Kentucky, Marriage Register.

¹⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, Circuit Court Ordinary Bundle, No. 9.

irresistable act of nature or God the defendants were disabled from leaving the farm in the repair required by the covenant.¹⁵

By the year 1813, however, the tax lists show that Dorsey owned 100 acres of land and three horses. The same year he was appointed a commissioner of the revenue tax. This was a responsible office and kept Dorsey busy several weeks with a fair remuneration. His brother, Greenberry, owned slaves but there is no record to show how Azel stood on this question, which was a live subject of debate in pioneer Kentucky.¹⁶

Dorsey arrived in the Indiana country as early as May 13, 1816, where he served as clerk of an election at the home of William Berry in Ohio Township, Warrick County. In the year 1818 he was serving as treasurer and coroner in what is now Spencer County, Indiana. Such responsible positions as these indicate that Dorsey was a leader in the affairs of the community. His good standing may have been responsible for his decision to enter the mercantile business as set forth in this agreement filed in the Spencer County Courthouse at Rockport on March 10, 1819:

A covenant and particular bond between A. W. Dorsey and M. B. Snyder. We do agree to and have this day entered into co-partnership in the mercantile business for the term of 5 years trading under the firm of Dorsey and Snyder. . . .

As early as 1820, Dorsey began to purchase lots in Rockport near where he then lived, but by March seventh of the following year he had moved to an adjacent county, Dubois. The census for 1820 shows him to have been a resident of Dubois County at that time. He and his wife are listed as between twenty-six and forty-five years of age. Three sons under ten years of age and one boy between ten and sixteen are also listed. By May 10, 1823, the family had returned to Spencer County but continued to sell some of their Rockport land holdings. It appears that their last Rockport real estate was sold in June, 1824.¹⁷ What became of the partnership venture with Snyder in the mercantile business is not known.

It seems most likely that it was during the early months of 1826 that Lincoln attended Dorsey's school. On March 1

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Order Book c.

¹⁶ Hardin County, Kentucky, County Court Tax lists, 1813.

¹⁷ Spencer County, Indiana, Deed Book, No. 1.

of that year, Lincoln copied into his manuscript book of examples several items under these headings: first,

"A definition of discount"; second, "Rules for its computation"; third, "Proofs and various examples."

Dorsey's qualifications to teach are evident as he was able to instruct James Swaney, a former teacher of Lincoln. It may be accepted without doubt that Dorsey was by far the best-equipped tutor of the two Kentucky and three Indiana teachers, who instructed Lincoln at different times. He fortunately came in contact with the boy at a time when some advanced training in mathematics would be helpful to him. When Lincoln became the pupil of Dorsey the latter was about forty-two years of age, as he was born on November 5, 1784. Dorsey migrated to the Illinois country two years before the Lincolns left Indiana where he taught a term of school in the fall and winter of 1828-29.

The late J. B. Oakleaf contributed an article to the *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* in which he tells of Dorsey's residence in Schuyler County, Illinois. Mr. Oakleaf was convinced that Dorsey was in the War of 1812 and that he received his land grant in Schuyler County in recognition of that service. In 1840, Dorsey entered two tracts of land in that county.¹⁸

Mr. Oakleaf was successful in discovering the grave of Dorsey and on the tombstone the date of his death was clearly inscribed as of September 13, 1858. The date of his death would not allow the acceptance of the tradition which claims that Dorsey was living at the time of Lincoln's election to the presidency. It does not invalidate, however, his reminiscences as they relate to his Indiana pupil, of whom Dorsey said:

Lincoln was then marked for the eagerness and diligence with which he pursued his studies, came to the log cabin school house arrayed in buck skin clothes, a raccoon-skin cap, and provided with an old arithmetic, which had been found for him to begin his investigations into the "higher branches."

It is to be regretted that the other two Indiana teachers of Abraham Lincoln did not leave some testimonies relative to his progress while attending their respective schools.

¹⁸ J. B. Oakleaf, "Azel W. Dorsey," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XXII, 447-50.

The main object of this paper has been to touch upon the qualifications of those who might have been expected to influence Abraham Lincoln in his studies at home and at school in Indiana, with the emphasis placed on his contacts with his Hoosier schoolmasters. There has been no attempt to present the opportunities and advancement which were open to him through the availability of books and newspapers. An account of his acquaintance with many of the distinguished men of the southern Indiana country, and the influence exerted over him by lawyers, preachers, and other men in public places has also been omitted. In other words this paper has not aspired to be an exhaustive study on Lincoln's early education.

Before this paper is brought to a close, one other incident should be mentioned which may serve as a sequel to his formal schooling. The modern educational maxim, "There is no impression without expression," found a fruitful field for fulfillment in Lincoln's own experience. The fact that there were two children in the Lincoln cabin home younger than Abraham invited the development of the expressional phase of his education which was responsible for the lasting impressions of his early days. Lincoln on one occasion referred to this feature of his training as one of the most valuable of all contributions to his early educational process. John Daniel Johnston, step-brother of Abraham, and six years his junior, was the chief object of Lincoln's expressional training. Daniel was a constant companion of Abraham, from 1820 to 1830. While Johnston was the main benefactor of this association, Lincoln's own improvement was assured by putting his remarks in such simple language that his younger associate could comprehend them.

One of the best evidences of this coöperative educational venture, by which both Lincoln and Johnston, profited is revealed in the part which they played in the Illinois elections of 1831 and 1832, less than two years after they left the same cabin home in the Hoosier state. Although Abraham Lincoln had been in the town of New Salem, Illinois, but a month he was asked to serve as a clerk of the election held on August 1, 1831. The following year he was on the ticket himself as a candidate for the Legislature from Sangamon County. Over in Coles County, Illinois, at the presidential election of 1832, John D. Johnston, step-brother of Abraham Lincoln, then but

seventeen years of age, was serving as clerk of the election as the following entry of November 10, 1832, in the county order book reveals: "Ordered that the treasury pay John D. Johnston or bearer the sum of sixty-two cents, for serving as clerk of the last presidential election, out of money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated."¹⁹ These two former inmates of the Indiana Lincoln cabin, invited to serve in remunerative offices, because of their educational qualifications, suggest a home atmosphere which must have been equal or even superior to the average cabin of the pioneer country.

When Abraham Lincoln stated that his education was defective he was comparing his early training with the more advanced educational opportunities of 1859. When he wrote his autobiographical sketch that the aggregate of his schooling would not amount to over one year, it should not be implied that his educational facilities suffered by comparison with most of the other pioneer boys and girls of early Indiana. His opportunities were only excelled by small groups of children who may have been living in the few centers of population where academies were established. Abraham Lincoln may not have known very much when he became of age, but there is plenty of evidence to show that he knew more than most of his contemporaries not excluding his Hoosier schoolmasters.

¹⁹ Coles County, Illinois, Order Book, I. 23.

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ABE LINCOLN'S SCHOOLING

In all of the accounts of the education of Abraham Lincoln we have been privileged to read, we have noticed very little credit given to his mother and step-mother for their tutorship. Both of these women could read and write; but beyond that fact it appears that history is lacking concerning their education. Both his mother and step-mother were Bible students and, unless our guess is far wrong, better students of The Word than many young mothers of today. No writer that we remember reading has sought to broaden our knowledge of the influence these two women had in nurturing the desires of this youth for an education. Undoubtedly Nancy Hanks Lincoln was an earnest helper as Abe mastered the alphabet and the contents of that first primer. About the only glimpse we have of her training is that scene when Nancy Lincoln realized her life was drawing to a close and she called the children and admonished them: " * * * 'Be good to one another,' expressing a hope that they might live, as they had been taught by her, to love their kindred and worship God." So Nancy Lincoln had taught her children in the primary rudiments of a real education! And Mrs. Sarah Lincoln, their step-mother continued the plan of education started by Mrs. Nancy Lincoln.

Of the later Mrs. Lincoln is known the most about her influence over these children, but if we could turn back the pages of time, we would undoubtedly find that these mothers had a wonderfully wholesome influence upon the education of this boy and girl and stood behind all of the schooling received otherwise. Why not give honor to Mrs. Nancy Lincoln and Mrs. Sarah Lincoln for their sturdy, upright characters and educational influences?

